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ABSTRACT

One strategy for better preparing students for teaching in contemporary schools is to offer them programs which provide extended field experience. If well-planned and directed, these programs can generate many benefits by integrating the theory and practice of teaching. The University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada), through various internship programs, offers students extended field experiences. Though these programs differ in many ways, they are all based on a philosophy of personalized professional growth. The Saanich Internship Program assigns students to a specific school for an entire school year, enabling them to teach under supervision at different grade levels. The Secondary Internship Program, designed for prospective secondary school teachers, involves an 8-month internship which allows students to teach and to observe other teachers. The Secondary Professional Year Music Program, designed for students who hold an academic degree in music, provides prospective teachers with an 8-month practicum. The Elementary Rural Teacher Preparation Program offers courses and teaching experiences at the University of Victoria and at more rural locations. The Educational Administration Graduate Cooperative Program, established for practicing administrators, offers an academic session, a 6-month internship, and a 2-month period for preparing a research report. (JD)

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# THE INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE: A PRIMARY FOCUS OF TEACHER EDUCATION INTERNSHIPS

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THE INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE:
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## Contemporary Canadian Society

Canadian society is experiencing in the last quarter of the twentieth century technological advances and changes in social behaviour greater than any previously recorded in the nation's history. Within this turbulent social milieu, as Kratzmann, Byrne and Worth (1980) point out, "a thousand and one subcultures exist, each with its own special agenda for schools" (p. 12). Satisfying such a diversity of demands is naturally impossible. Consequently, only the needs of specific groups are met which leads to adversity and political interaction.

The political dimension of Canadian public school systems has become more predominant over the past decade as parents have formed themselves into groups in order to lobby provincial governments. Since the late seventies, Canadians have become more concerned about themselves than ever in the past. Larsch (1978) in his book The culture of narcissism describes this preoccupation which individuals have with themselves as 'the culture of narcissism'. Furthermore, as a consequence of greater emphasis on freedom of expression parents increasingly comment, often in public arenas, about the services and programmes provided by public school systems. These forces have required schools to become more 'open' institutions. A greater involvement of parents in many aspects of school life is occurring throughout Canada. Recently, the British Columbia Ministry of Education recommended that all schools form Parent Advisory Committees to assist teachers and principals establish a more effective learning environment.

A period of progressivism which characterized Canadian education in the sixties resulted in curricula and school activities being more child-centred. The Hall-Dennis (1968) report, Learning and Living, served as a base for numerous innovative teaching practices such as continuous progress, non-gradedness and individualized instruction. The general curricula of

schools changed from specific subjects such as history, geography and mathematics to more general areas of academic study such as environmental studies, humanities and communications. Greater decentralization of the educational enterprise became the major focus of government.

By the early seventies, the forces behind the progressive movement had substatially decreased in magnitude; in fact, parents were beginning to demand a return to the basics and a more traditional approach to learning. The promises made by educators in the sixties had not been fulfilled. Both politicians and taxpayers began to question the large amounts of public funds being invested in education. Within a decade, public confidence in education had drastically declined. Many individuals began to doubt whether education was having any significant impact on economic growth and social development.

Concerns regarding the value of education intensified as the economic climate of the nation deteriorated; fewer and fewer funds were available for the public sector. Consequently, public agencies were asked to account for their utilization of public funds. As the economic climate decreased to even lower levels, these agencies were asked to justify their continuing to receive the funds which they had been allocated in the past. An era of adversity was emerging in education which continues today.

Similar to many other western nations, Canada, during this period, began to experience a number of significant, demographic changes. Two of these movements were a rapidly maturing population and a decreasing birthrate. One consequence of these changes was that there were fewer pupils for public schools. This decline in enrolment meant that fewer teachers were needed to staff schools. Many school districts found themselves in the difficult position of having more teachers on staff than they could financially support or justify.

The societal forces under discussion have had a significant impact on Canadian schools. Parents frequently question the authority of schools and demand honest answers to questions concerning their children's performance

Fewer teaching vacancies exist in most school districts. A number of urban districts have recruited no new teachers for the past two years. Most student teachers now accept that they will begin their professional careers in small rural communities which may have a life style quite different from their own experiences.

Provincial governments are reducing the funds for educational activities. Past investments in education do not appear to have yielded adequate returns. Declining enrollments have resulted in many teachers being assigned multi-grade classes and split-grades without additional support services. As public confidence in education has decreased, teacher morale has accordingly declined. In British Columbia, only 22 percent of the 528 rural teachers who participated in a study conducted by Haughey and Murphy (1982) were moderately to highly satisfied with the quality of their worklife.

The young teachers graduating from Canadian universities are entering a public school system which differs substantially from the one that existed when many of their senior colleagues and university instructors began their careers. How can present teacher preparation programmes be modified so that beginning teachers are better prepared for the schools of tomorrow? This is a challenge which is confronting teacher educators in many western countries.

## Extended Field Experience

Traditionally, many Canadian universities have delayed exposing student teachers to the challenges of the classroom until they are in their senior years of study. Many students found after several years at university that teaching was not what they expected. These students are faced with the very important decision of whether or not to continue their studies. Most of these individuals are dissatisfied whatever decision they make. A decade ago, Silberman (1970) expounded the disadvantage of delaying students exposure to the real world of the classroom.

Many teacher educators strongly believe that students should have a sound knowledge and good understanding of educational theory, teaching methods,

evaluation procedures and classroom management practices. These scholars maintain that throwing an individual in at the deep end of a swimming pool, without any training, is not necessarily the most effective procedure for learning how to swim. Similarly, they report that early exposure to the classroom is not necessarily in the best interest of many students.

The extended field experience concept has been the focus of many debates in universities and field settings. The better prepared a student is before entering a classroom will undoubtedly have a substantial impact on his performance. However, learning from experience does offer insights into the art of teaching which cannot be obtained in any other manner.

The integration of theory and practice in teaching is an extremely difficult task but one which must be the primary focus of teaching education institutions. The university scholar who acquaints students with the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of teaching is frequently perceived by his colleagues in the field as being out-of-touch with reality. Alternatively, classroom teachers are often considered by their university associates to be over-concerned with the day-to-day general activities of teaching which require minimal conceptualization. An obvious solution to this perception issue, as Allen (1976) points out, is for "professors to follow the students into the schools, working with them directly or through the supervising teachers to help them develop and apply insights derived from relevant disciplines in their daily tasks" (p. 45).

Since the early seventies, as Barnett (1975) reports, "the pendulum in Canadian teacher education appears to have swung (sic) toward increased classroom experience" (p. 46). There has been a general belief among Canadian teacher educators that early field experience enables a student to observe for himself the importance of educational theory in the classroom. Both the university faculty member and sponsor teacher have been perceived as cooperatively assisting the student to accomplish this transfer of learning. This is a task which requires the scholar and practitioner to establish a close working relationship.

Though the extended field experience concept obviously generates many benefits for student teachers, there are a number of problems which arise when the concept is put into practice. Firstly, as Barnett (1975) points out, "some young people may not be emotionally mature enough to gain from such experience" (p. 45). For these individuals an extended field experience can be a disaster. Many of them would undoubtedly discontinue any thoughts of becoming a teacher. A second problem reported by Campbell (1980) is that "absence of a shared and well articulated conceptual basis results in highly idiosyncratic experiences for students" (p. 71). Regretfully, faculty members and sponsor teachers do not always work in a collegial professional manner.

Many faculty members are reluctant to visit students for extended periods of time since publishing is often the principal criterion used for awarding tenure, promotions and merit pay. As a result of this circumstance, part-time faculty associates or graduate students are assigned the responsibility of supervising student teachers. Therefore, very few undergraduate students have personal contact with the eminent scholar who is advancing our knowledge of teaching or other educational disciplines. Allen (1976) astutely points out that "it becomes essential to find teachers who want student teachers ... and who are willing to spend considerable time in working with them" (p. 47).

The pros and cons of the extended field experience concept are many; only a few have been mentioned in this report. However, one thing is certain: if student teachers are to cope effectively with the demands and challenges which our contemporary society is generating for public schools, it is imperative that they be exposed to the real world of the classroom as soon as they are considered qualified to learn from the experience.

## Teacher Education Internships

The University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, for several years has offered students a number of teacher education internship programmes which provide extended field experience. All these teacher preparation

programmes are based on a philosophy of personalized professional growth (McLaughlin and Murphy, 1982). A brief description of each programme is provided.

The Saanich Internship Programme. The most distinguishing feature of the Saanich Programme is that students are assigned to the staff of a specific school, in the Saanich School District, for a school year. Under the direction of practising teachers and faculty members, a student teaches in the mornings one class in each of his/her two teaching areas. At the end of the first semester, a student's school and workload are changed so he/she can teach at a different grade level. As a supernumerary member of staff, a student is expected to participate in extra-curricular activities and assist senior colleagues to perform routine school duties (see Figure 1).

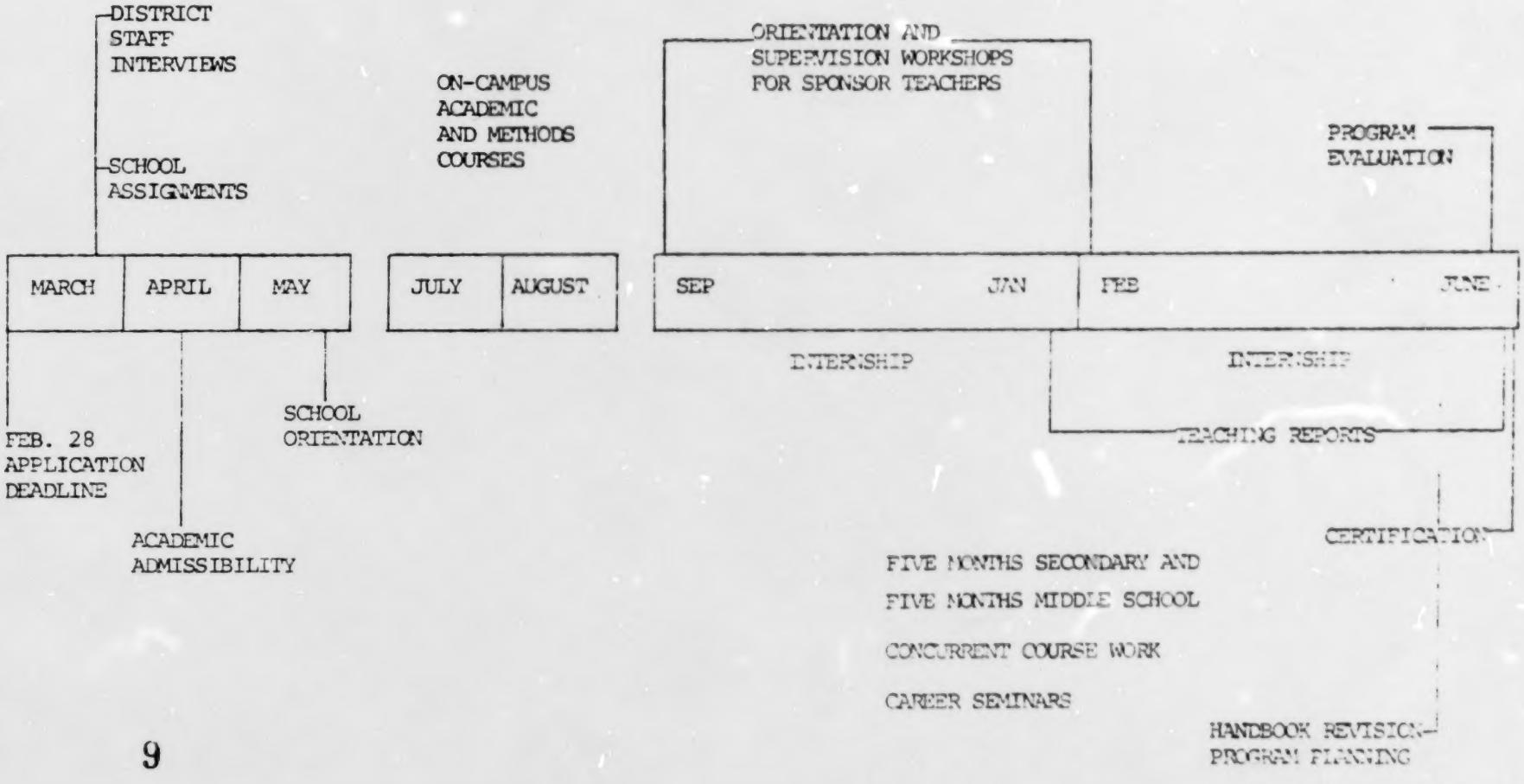
During the school year, students are required in the afternoons to complete a number of professional courses. Several of these courses are taught, by faculty members, in one of the sponsoring schools. Students complete remaining course requirements during Summer Studies. Once course requirements are satisfied, students are eligible for certification by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. All students who participate in this internship programme receive $200.00 per month as a cost of living allowance from the Saanich School District.

The Secondary Internship Programme. The Secondary Internship Programme is designed for prospective secondary school teachers. All applicants must possess a degree from a recognized university in teaching areas appropriate to British Columbia secondary schools or be in the fifth year of a Bachelor of Education programme. Admission is usually very competitive. Applicants are selected by school district personnel from the school districts on mid-Vancouver Island where the programme is located.

After being accepted for the programme, students are required to attend a one-week orientation in their assigned school district. This provides the students with an opportunity to meet sponsor teachers and principals, to visit schools, to be informed of teaching assignments, and to become familiar with

Figure 1

The Saanich Internship Programme



the community in which they are going to work. After their orientation, held usually in late May, students complete four professional courses during Summer Studies in July and August.

Early in September, students join the staff of the schools where they are going to complete their eight month internship. Students' teaching is usually limited to about 50 percent of the school day. The remaining time is devoted to preparation, marking, discussions with sponsoring teachers and observing senior teachers. Academic studies are temporarily suspended in the internship phase. In most cases, students spend five months of the internship at a junior secondary school and three months at a senior secondary school - or the reverse.

The course requirements for certification are completed, after the September - April internship, during May and June (see Figure 2). All students receive $300.00 per month from the school district as a cost of living allowance.

The Secondary Professional Year Music Programme. This programme has been especially designed as the teacher certification year for students who have completed the University of Victoria Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education (Secondary) or who are in the fifth year of a Bachelor of Education programme (Secondary Curriculum) with music as one of the two teaching areas. Beginning on the Wednesday after Labour Day the students are assigned to work with a secondary music teacher in the Victoria area. Since these students have already had considerable school experiences in earlier years, they are ready to start actual teaching activities very early in their September to April practicum. Music students are required to spend a minimum of six half-days per week in their assigned schools and are on-campus for academic courses one day a week (see Figure 3). They are required to become involved in a wide range of experiences in the school, including extra-curricular work. The methods component of the programme is covered during the in-school period.

The main segment of university class work consists of the 'Integrated Professional Program (Regular)' listed as EDUC 799A. This course is team taught by regular faculty members and special guest instructors brought in

Figure 2

The Secondary Internship Programme

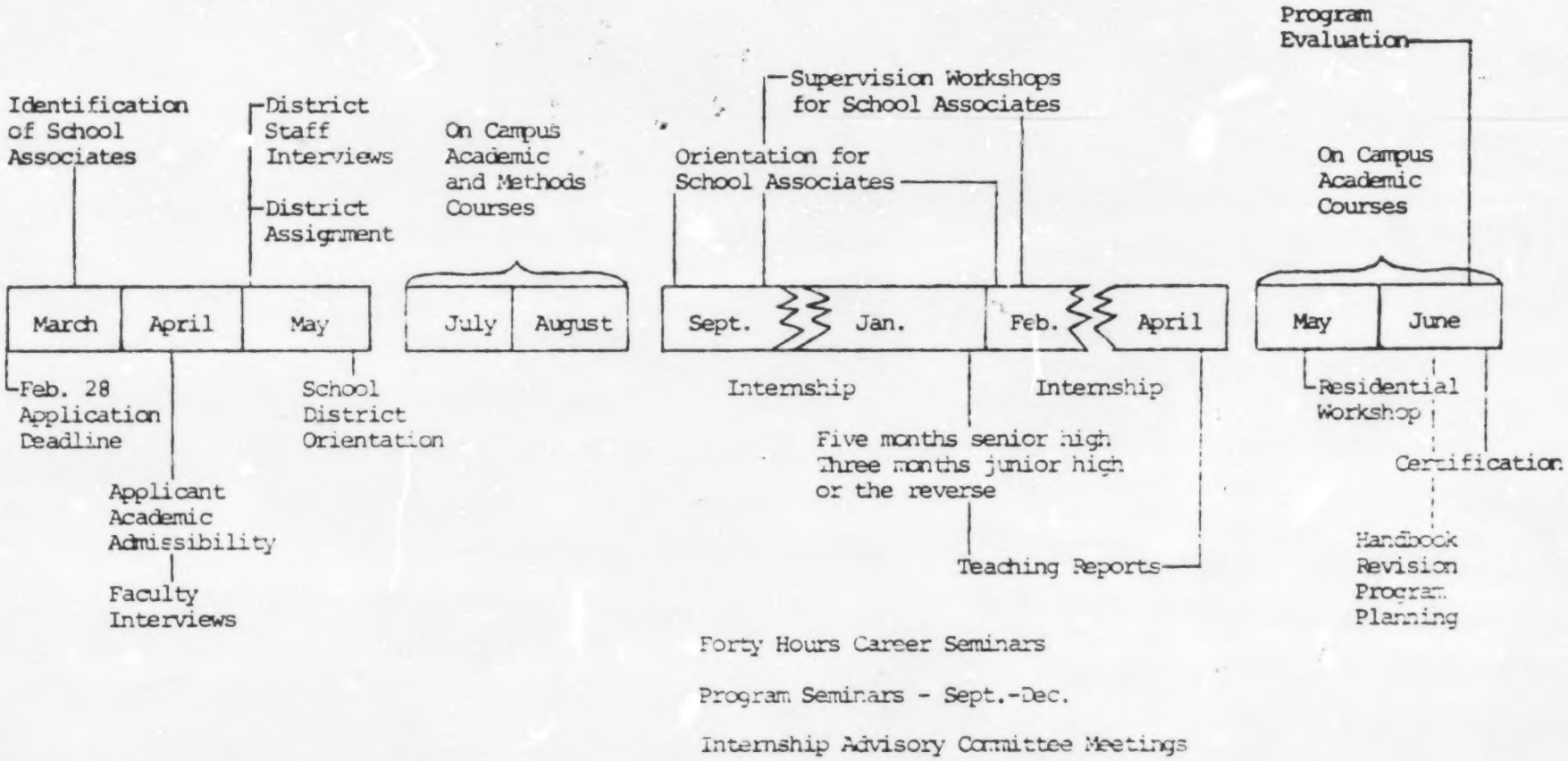


Figure 3

The Secondary Music Programme

| SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. | DEC. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Practicum in schools in Victoria, Sooke, or Saanich for minimum of six half-days a week. Courses on-campus on Fridays. | | | |

| JAN. | FEB. | MAR. | APR. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Practicum in schools in Victoria, Sooke, Saanich, Nanaimo or Courtenay minimum of six half-days a week. | | | |

Students with a teaching area in addition to music complete their music practicum from September to December and their second area practicum from January to April in Victoria, Sooke, or Saanich.

for specific topics, such as: foundations of education, administration and management of education in British Columbia, measurement and evaluation, media education and library education. Since 'Reading in Secondary Schools' is a course all professional year students are required to complete this course is included in the integrated package.

The Elementary Rural Teacher Preparation Programme. All the students who are admitted into the rural elementary teacher education programme are required to study for two years at the main campus of the University of Victoria. During this period the students study a variety of academic and professional subjects to broaden their knowledge base and to gain an awareness of teaching methods. The third and fourth year of the programme are completed at the David Thompson University Centre, Nelson, British Columbia, a satellite campus of the University of Victoria. This Centre is situated in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and consequently is surrounded by many small rural communities. Hence, it is an ideal setting for acquainting students with the professional life of a rural teacher and for sensitizing them to the socio-cultural character of rural communities.

In the first term of the third year of their programme, students continue studying academic and professional subjects. Issues of importance to rural teachers are given special attention during discussions. The second term of their studies offers students an opportunity to obtain first hand experience as a rural teacher. All the students complete a four month internship in two rural schools during this period. As part of this practicum, the students are required to: (1) teach multi-grade classes; (2) teach at both the primary and intermediate level; (3) participate in extra-curricular activities; and (4) become involved in community affairs.

The students must maintain a professional journal of their experiences during the internship. These journal entries serve as a base for discussion with faculty members and sponsor teachers about the difficulties which students encounter. Sponsor teachers play a very important role in assisting students adjust to the demands of teaching in a small rural school. Upon request these highly qualified professionals provide students with career counselling

and answer questions related to life in a rural community. Through this tutorial procedure, strong professional relationships and bonds of friendships are established between student and teacher. Visiting faculty members advise students on how to improve their teaching techniques.

The fourth year of the programme is similar in structure to the third year. Academic and professional subjects are studied at the Centre and the students complete their teaching practice in local rural schools. The fourth year practicum, as shown in Figure 4, is a standard six week session rather than a four month internship. Students who satisfactorily complete their fourth year of studies are eligible for a provincial teaching certificate.

The Educational Administration Graduate Cooperative Programme. In July, 1979, a graduate cooperative programme was established for practising administrators. This 14 month programme, as shown in Figure 5, is comprised of three basic components, namely: (1) a six-month academic session; (2) a six-month internship; and (3) a two-month period for preparing a research report. Both renowned scholars and outstanding field administrators provide instructure in such subjects as: (1) educational finance; (2) educational planning; (3) philosophy of administration, and (4) concepts and theory in administration. The thrust of instruction is to provide a strong linkage between the theory and practice of educational administration.

During the administrative internships, students are required to complete an applied research study for their sponsoring agencies. Most students find this assignment a great challenge because they are required to satisfy both the academic standards of the university and acknowledge the political forces in the field placement. For the first time many of the students realize that a decision is frequently made on the balance of power associated with an issue.

As part of the internship, the field supervisors are required to access the coop students to 'in-camera' as well as to public meetings. After each session supervisor and student analyze the political consequences of various decisions and comment on the actions of various interest groups. Through these discussions the students become sensitized to the micro-politics of administration.

Figure 4

Rural Elementary Teacher Preparation Programme

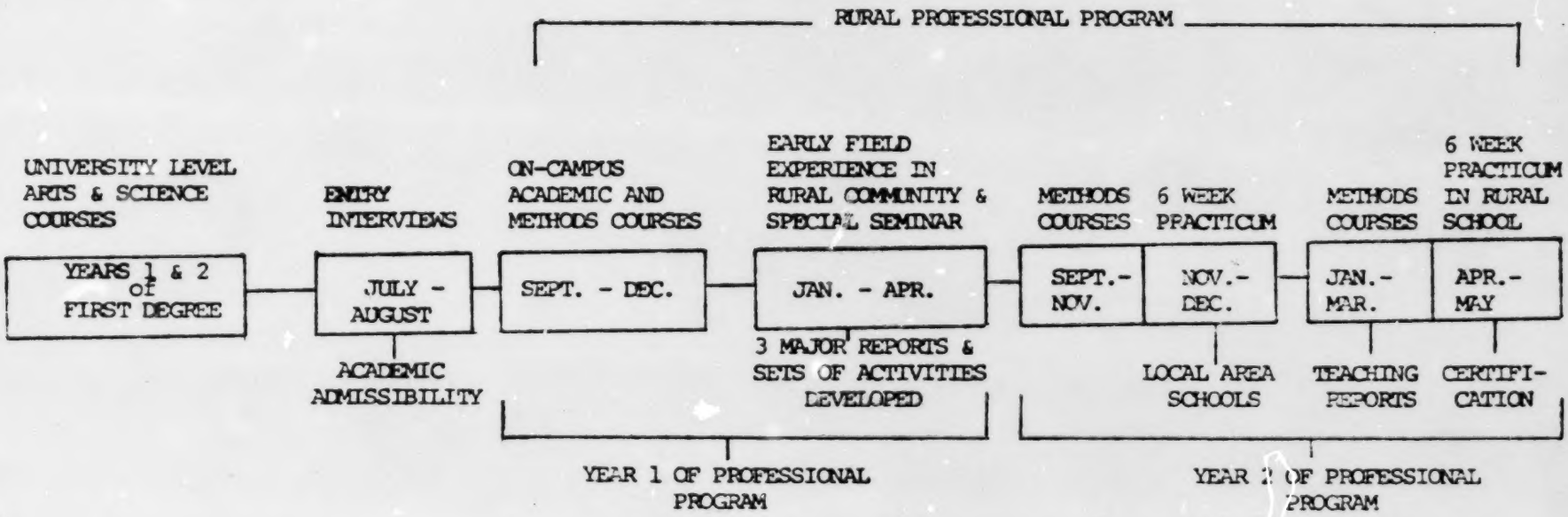
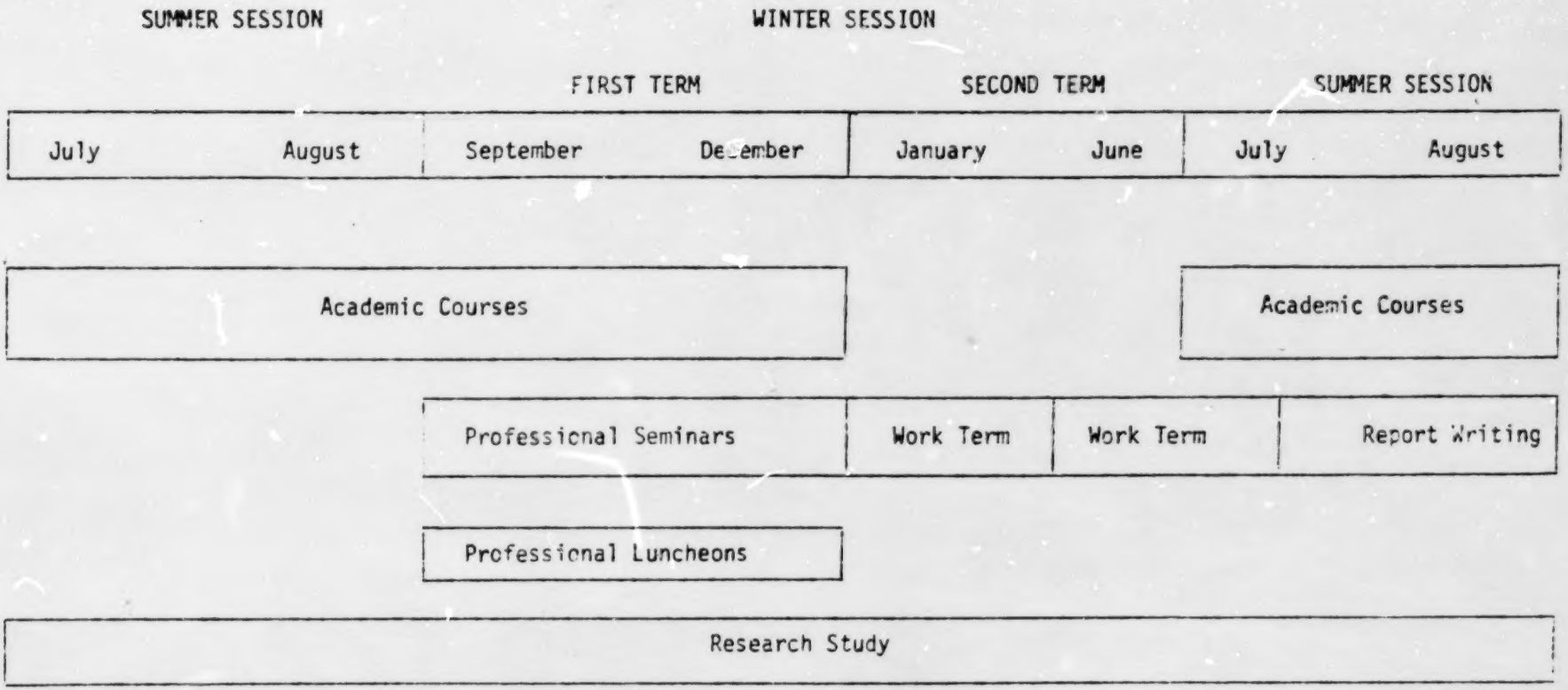


Figure 5

The Graduate Cooperative Programme



While on campus students attend weekly professional seminars, informal discussions designed to attain two principals purposes, namely: (1) to acquaint students with the analytical procedure, research methodologies, sampling techniques and formal requirements of research studies; and (2) to extend the students' awareness of the political aspects of administration. The first purpose is satisfied by standard classes on research methods. The second purpose, however, is achieved by a more innovative approach. Senior educational administrators from government agencies, community colleges, and public school districts are invited to attend several classes as guest speakers. A requirement for accepting the invitation is that the speaker is willing to "tell 60 percent of the truth" when answering questions, rather than responding with politically acceptable answers. The sessions are always 'in-camera'; a high level of trust as well as a significant degree of confidentiality is developed between the speaker and his audience. These sessions often reveal that though students possess some administrative experience they are frequently 'politically naive' regarding decision-making at an executive level.

Comment

As our society becomes more technologically orientated and socially complex the profession of teaching is going to become more demanding. One strategy for better preparing students for contemporary schools is to offer them programmes which provide extended field experience. If well-planned and directed, these programmes can generate many benefits by the fact that they endeavour more closely to integrate the theory and practice of teaching.

The University of Victoria, through a number of internship programmes offers students an extended field experience. Though these programmes differ in many ways, they are all based on a philosophy of personalized professional growth. With appropriate modifications these programmes could be easily introduced into other socio-economic settings.

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